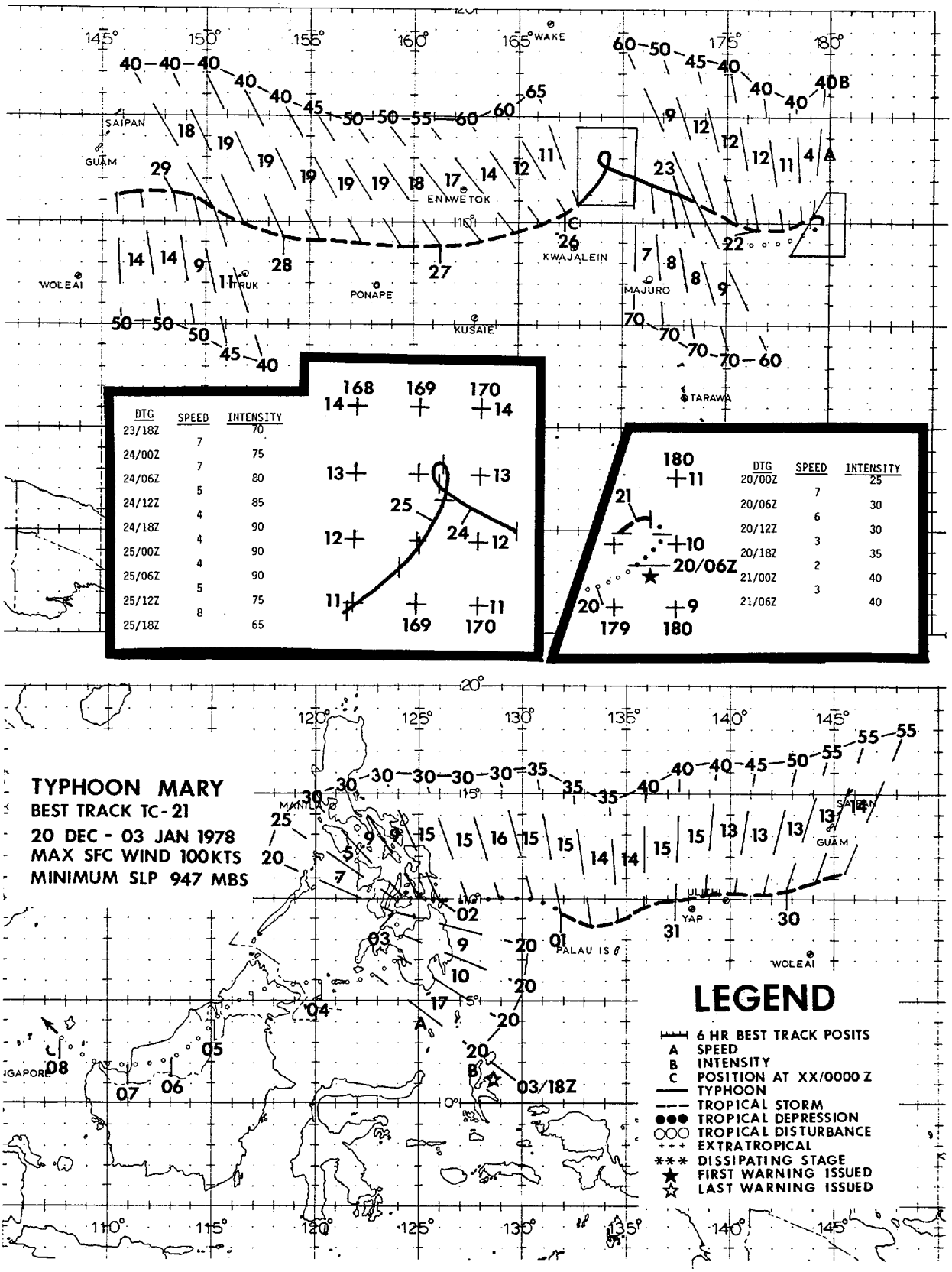
TYPHOON MARY
BEST TRACK TC-21
20 DEC - 03 JAN 1978
MAX SFC WIND 100KTS
MINIMUM SLP 947 MBS
DTG SPEED INTENSITY
23/18Z 7 70
24/00Z 7 75
24/06Z 5 80
24/12Z 4 85
24/18Z 4 90
25/00Z 4 90
25/06Z 5 90
25/12Z 8 75
25/18Z 65
DTG SPEED INTENSITY
20/00Z 7 25
20/06Z 6 30
20/12Z 3 30
20/18Z 2 35
21/00Z 3 40
21/06Z 40
20/06Z
03/18Z
LEGEND
6 HR BEST TRACK POSITS
A SPEED
B INTENSITY
C POSITION AT XX/0000 Z
TYPHOON
TROPICAL STORM
TROPICAL DEPRESSION
TROPICAL DISTURBANCE
EXTRATROPICAL
DISSIPATING STAGE
FIRST WARNING ISSUED
LAST WARNING ISSUED
SAIPAN
GUAM
WOLEAI
TRUK
PONAPE
KUSAIE
ENIWETOK
KWAJALEIN
MAJURO
TARAWA
WAKE
MANILA
YAP
ULITHI
PALAU IS
SINGAPORE

Mary, the 11th and final typhoon of the year moved across the western Pacific for 15 days and covered 4002 nm (7445 km), the second longest storm on record for distance traveled. On the 19th of December satellite data detected a tropical disturbance moving slowly east-northeastward near 9N-177E where weak steering currents existed. Steering was primarily influenced by the winter season westerlies, which extended far into the subtropics. During the next few hours, satellite data indicated slow intensification while a well defined comma shaped cloud was becoming evident (Fig. 4-33). At 0000Z on the 20th a formation alert was issued. Upper air data at 500 mb indicated that a strong mid-tropospheric subtropical ridge had formed to the west of the disturbance. At the same time an intense mid-latitude 500 mb trough was approaching. The combined effects of this trough and a strong anticyclone above the storm produced steady upper level divergence and created a well defined outflow channel to the north. Further intensification appeared likely and the first warning was issued on TD 21 at 0600Z on the 20th. However, for the next 24 hours, the system became quasi-stationary near 10N-179E as the westerlies gradually receded northward. During this period the system grew to tropical storm strength as GOES imagery indicated increased outflow to the north.

Shortly after 1200Z on the 21st, the storm began to accelerate westward. The 500 mb trough to the north had moved eastward with a ridge now developing north of Mary. This formation imparted westerly steering flow south of the ridge axis. Mary responded and quickly accelerated to 12 kt (22 km/hr). On the 22nd Mary turned toward the west-northwest in response to a shallow mid-latitude trough which weakened the subtropical ridge northwest of the storm. By 0000Z on the 23rd Mary reached typhoon intensity as satellite data indicated continued increase in outflow and formation of an eye. Mary slowed to 8 kt (15 km/hr) and continued moving west-northwest for the next 30 hours while intensifying further.

The first aircraft reconnaissance entered the storm at 0115Z on the 24th and reported 90 kt (46 m/sec) maximum surface winds and 75 kt (39 m/sec) winds at 700 mb. Satellite data also estimated the storm intensity to be 75 kt (39 m/sec). About five hours later, Mary began to decelerate while nearing a weakness in the subtropical ridge. Then the storm turned northward and appeared as though recurvature was beginning. However, analysis of 500 mb synoptic data indicated the mid-latitude westerlies were again receding. The subtropical ridge again reestablished itself and Mary responded by looping clockwise and was subsequently influenced by the northerly flow around the eastern edge of a strong, eastward migrating anticyclone. The storm now moved south-southwestward at 5 kt (9 km/hr). Satellite data (Fig. 4-34) indicated Mary had continued to intensify and at 0314Z on the 25th aircraft reconnaissance indicated a central pressure of 947 mb with maximum sustained surface winds of 100 kt (51 m/sec). Just three hours later, Utirik Atoll 55 nm (102 km) southeast of Mary, recorded winds of 40 kt (21 m/sec).

Mary soon began to accelerate to 12 kt (22 km/hr) towards the west-southwest along the southeastern periphery of the strengthening subtropical high cell. The resulting steering flow at mid-levels plus rapid movement of the typhoon were expected to weaken Mary. By the 26th satellite data indicated

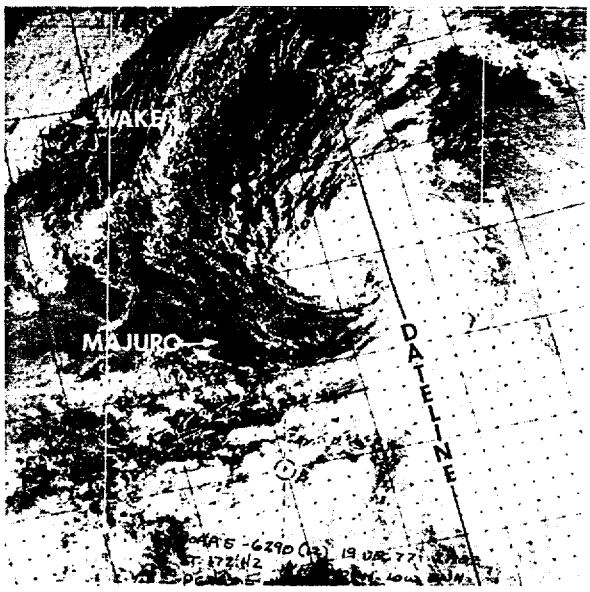

FIGURE 4-33. Mary during initial development near the dateline, 19 December 1977, 2110Z. (NOAA-5 imagery)

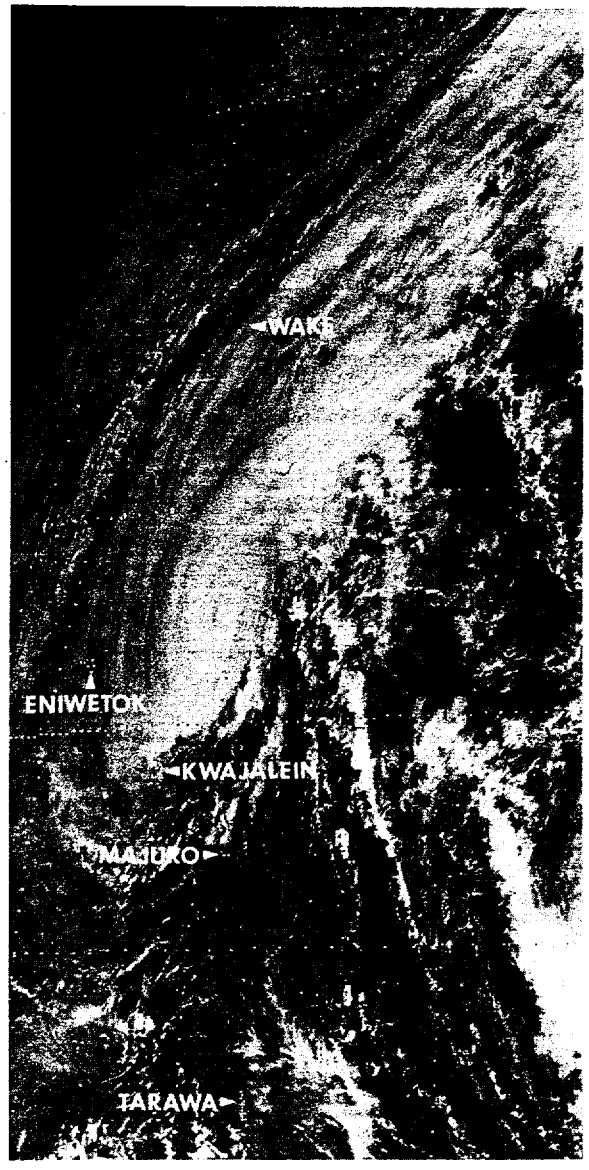

FIGURE 4-34. Typhoon Mary during execution of a loop 6 hours before attaining a maximum 100 kt (51 m/sec) intensity, 24 December 1977, 2049Z. (GOES imagery from SFSS, Honolulu, HI)

Mary had indeed weakened and Mary was downgraded to a tropical storm. Aircraft reconnaissance at 0357Z on the 26th confirmed corresponding satellite data when 60 kt (31 m/sec) surface winds were observed.

As Mary turned westward along the southern boundary of the subtropical high cell, the storm accelerated to 19 kt (35 km/hr). By the 28th Mary began moving west-northwestward in response to another trough induced weakness in the subtropical ridge. Mary again slowed due to the weaker steering currents. Satellite data once again indicated intensification (Fig. 4-35). As the trough moved rapidly eastward, the subtropical ridge again strengthened north of the storm and Mary turned west-southwestward and began to weaken for the second time. Accelerating steadily Mary attained a 15 kt (28 km/hr) forward movement and continued to weaken as development became restricted by the expanding ridge.

Mary continued her westward movement for the next several days. Weakening slowly, the storm was downgraded to a tropical depression at 0000Z on the 1st of January. The system maintained 30 kt (15 m/sec) winds until moving over the central Philippines near Leyte Gulf. Satellite data indicated rapid dissipation over land with the final warning issued at 1800Z on the 3rd. Mary turned sharply southward over the Philippines when the strong northeast monsoon was encountered, which aided rapid dissipation.

Although Mary was not the longest lived storm on record, the 4002 nm (7445 km) distance traveled was the second longest. What is also noteworthy is that no injuries or major damage resulted during its long journey across the western Pacific. Mary was indeed a fitting end to a most unusual tropical cyclone year.

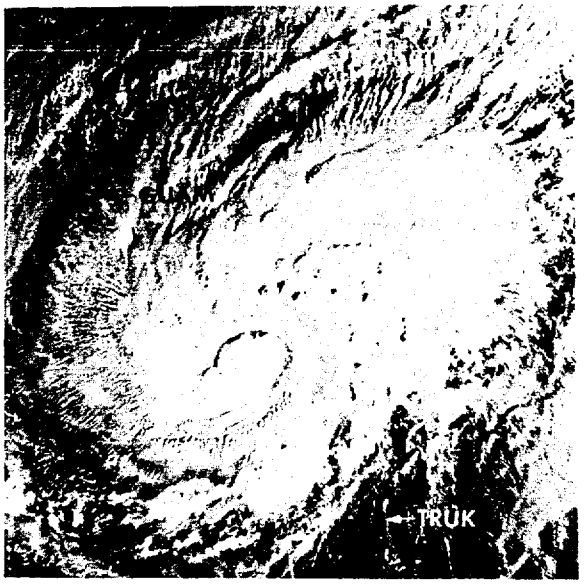

FIGURE 4-35. Mary at 50 kt (26 m/sec) intensity and slowly deepening between Guam and Truk, 28 December 1977, 2136Z. (DMSP imagery)